

## Boating & Water Safety Media Interview Fact Sheet – Updated 5/13/2015

The US Army Corps of Engineers is the leading provider of outdoor recreation with over 400 lake and river projects in 43 states enjoyed by 370 million visitors every year. We want all our visitors to enjoy their stay, play it safe and return home alive to the ones they love.

Knowing some of the facts about drowning may help save your life or the life of someone you love. According to US Army Corps of Engineers statistics, the majority of people (88%) who drown are male, 39% are 18-35 years old, 24% are 36-53 years old and 89% of the people who die in water-related accidents were not wearing a life jacket. Over 90% of the people who die in boating-related accidents had not taken a boating safety course.

**TIP:** Are You Next? Expect the Unexpected and Wear Your Life Jacket! The question is “Are You Next?” You could be the next person to drown if you don’t play it safe. Your best defense against the unexpected is a life jacket. Wear your life jacket and encourage those you love to wear one too.

**TIP:** Learn to swim well and swim with a buddy. It only takes an average of 20 seconds for a child to drown and 60 seconds for an adult. Never let your children swim by themselves. Adult supervision is a must to ensure you don’t lose the ones you love. Swimming ability decreases with age so even if you are a strong swimmer wear your life jacket especially in open water conditions.

**TIP:** Many people who drown never intended to enter the water and they drown within 10-30 feet of safety. Sixty percent of the time people who drown were either witnessed by someone or there were people in the area that could have helped save them.

**TIP:** Learn to identify the four signs of a person who is drowning. The drowning signs are head back, mouth open, no sound and arms slapping the water in an up and down motion.

**TIP:** The proper ways to rescue someone in the water that is in distress is to reach, throw, row, don’t go. Reach something out to the person without endangering yourself, throw them something that floats, row your boat close to the person with the motor off. Never attempt an in-water rescue unless you are trained to do so. Instead, go for help or send someone else for help. Oftentimes a double-drowning occurs when someone enters the water to attempt a rescue because a person fighting for their life is extremely strong and in order to stay afloat they will hold the person who is trying to help them underwater.

**TIP:** Take a boater safety course and boat with a buddy. According to the U.S. Coast Guard 88% of the people that died in a boating accident were on vessels where the operator had not taken a NASBLA-approved boater safety course. There are on-line courses available at [www.boat-ed.com](http://www.boat-ed.com). US Coast Guard Auxiliary <http://cgaux.org/boatinged> and US Power Squadrons [www.usps.org](http://www.usps.org) offer courses in most states. As a bonus, many insurance companies offer reduced rates for taking a boating safety course.

### **Extra Messages, if time allows:**

- It takes less than ½ cup of water in your lungs to drown. A sudden unexpected fall into cold water causes an involuntary gasp (or torso) reflex, which can lead to your last breath being of water, instead of air.
- When underwater and under the influence of alcohol or drugs you can suffer from an inner ear condition (caloric labyrinthitis) that causes you to become disoriented and not know which way is up. Also, you can develop “boater’s hypnosis” a condition in response to sun, wind, noise, vibration and motion, which causes fatigue and slows your reaction time. Combining that condition with alcohol or drugs greatly reduces your coordination, judgment and reaction time, which could lead to deadly consequences.

**Summary:** Tips that will keep you and the ones you love alive include take a boating safety course, learn to swim well, swim & boat with a buddy, learn how to identify a drowning victim and know what you can do to rescue them. The most important thing you can do to keep yourself or someone you love alive while recreating in or around the water is to wear a life jacket and encourage others to do so. Ask yourself, are you or someone you love likely to be the next person to drown and take actions to make sure you are not next!